Moral Reform by E. D. Bryan

The cause thus entitled has its centre of operations in New York city. It is conducted by two Societies. One composed of ladies the other of Gentlemen. Each of these Societies publishes a periodical paper. And they appear to be co-operating in the work with perfect harmony. Their reports evince considerable energy and spirit, on the part of those engaged. They have enlisted several distinguished individuals in the cause. ~~Some contribute their efforts, others~~ And some hired agents, who devote their whole time to this self-denying work. — Auxilliaries are springing up in different parts of the country. Mr McDonall, has risen, Phœnix-like, from his ashes, and published a new improved edition of his "Ladies book". — Friends and friends are crowding the altar of this appendage to the gospel — Light, is just struggling through the clouds and mists, which have heretofore intervened, between this moral sun and our benighted world. Some favoured ones are already basking in the full blaze of its vivifying rays, and multitudes are just begin-

-ning to catch its influence and show signs of life. — In short, the reports disclose a most wonderful transformation of public opinion. And this most inveterate monster, which has been the pimp of human corruption since the time of Ammon, is now in the process of extermination, by this modern crusade. — But notwithstanding these encouraging symptoms, if their Journals are correct in representing it, the evil of licentiousness is increasing to a most alarming extent, — New modes of seduction are constantly invented, and in successful operation. And they affirm that the attempt to reform abandoned characters of this class, is a hopeless task. So that with these diverse statements before us, it is extremely difficult to form even a plausible conjecture, as to the result of this enterprise. It is now in the course of experiment, and its real tendency is concealed in the womb of futurity. — While we are willing to concede to the sanguine friends of this cause, some of the benefit they have in prospect, as the certain result of their labours; Candour compels us to point out the present evil attending the system. Farther than this we need not go. — No one, surely, will demand our reasons, for declining to aid in any device that good

may come. — That familiarity with vice, tends to lessen its odiousness cannot be doubted, by any one acquainted with human nature.

This principle is happily expressed in those oft-quoted lines of Mr Pope.

> Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
> Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

The exposure of such facts in public prints, — detailing with minuteness the circumstances and mode of life of these abandoned creatures; together with the manner of their seduction, introduces the reader, as it were, into their very society, — familiarizes him with their conversation; and brings him into as close contact, almost as if he were to associate in person, with the very filth of society. And who are the individuals thus designed to be instructed? — Not Angels — not perfect beings — not men of fixed principles — but ladies, and young men, are persuaded to read these disclosures. — Parents, are recommended to take the papers for the benefit of their families. The uninitiated, are solicited to search these storehouses of information in the midnight art. — Can it be doubted, that evil communications corrupt good morals? — That the moral sense will be blunted, the passions inflamed? The dictates of reason and conscience crushed by the perusal of such works? — They tell us of the baneful

influence of works of fiction. — But to this the reply is made, and not without some reason, that Byron, Bulwer and Scott, with all their alluring pictures of imagination, produce actually less effect, than some of those direct appeals to the senses, which are found in the Journals of these Benevolent Societies. — It cannot, for a moment be supposed, that we insinuate a doubt, as to good intentions of those engaged in this Reform.

We do indeed deprecate, the employment of Ladies, as conductors of this concern. It is in itself so utterly & manifestly incongruous and indelicate as to require no proof. Yet we do not hesitate to believe, and assert, that they would not publish a single line, whose tendency was suspected to be bad. Their reputation for piety, benevolence and respectability, is unblemished. We who are removed from the scenes of these enormities cannot perhaps fully appreciate the feelings which actuate those living on the spot, and constantly receiving information on the subject. Yet we cannot but express a conviction so solemnly and powerfully impressing our minds, that the free publication of detailed accounts on the subject of licentiousness, has a manifest tendency to debauch the mind, and occasion the most indelicate feelings in the intercourse of society.

Let not our allusion to the popular novels of the day, be misunderstood. We consider them in a high degree pernicious; as tending to unsettle moral principle — inducing levity of mind — and creating a taste for those fashionable amusements, which sap the foundations of morality.

In regard to those entertainments, so much esteemed by the gay world, such as the Theatre — Ball — Card playing &c, it is scarcely necessary to say, that they are still supported, and in some places much resorted to. Their tendency, as it would not be difficult to show, is decidedly fatal to the best interests of mankind.

Here, frequently is commenced that downward course, pursued by the thoughtless youth, which terminates in the shipwreck of his hopes, both for this life and that which is to come.

Upon the whole, we think the standard of morality, is in a gradual process of elevation in our land. Tho' we have no disposition to adopt the new code, which some would substitute for, or at least superadd to the good old Moral Law, given at Sinai. which we doubt not will always be found fully competent to meet the various times, corrupt human nature may take. —